

Statement of the High Representative for Disarmament Affairs
Preparatory Committee
for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty

New York, 12 July 2010

Excellencies,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty. I am especially pleased to greet my good friend Ambassador Roberto Garcia Moritán, who returns as Chairperson, having so ably chaired the Open-ended Working Group last year and the Group of Governmental Experts in 2008. I am confident that Ambassador Moritán's wealth of knowledge and experience will serve this negotiation process well..

Allow me to turn to the issues at hand and to comment on the challenging task entrusted to you by the General Assembly. In all parts of the world, the ready availability of conventional weapons and ammunition has led to human suffering, repression, crime and terror among civilian populations. Sometimes, the irresponsible transfer of conventional weapons can destabilize security in a region, enable the violation of Security Council arms embargoes and contribute to human rights abuses. Importantly, investment is discouraged and development disrupted in countries experiencing conflict and high levels of violence, which also affect their ability to attain the Millennium Development Goals. These factors have contributed to the recent drive calling for the global regulation of the conventional arms trade, which has garnered support from politicians and civil society.

After the adoption of a resolution on an arms trade treaty in **2006**,¹ an unprecedented number of Member States submitted their views to the **2007** report of the Secretary-General on the issue. Then, in **2008**, a Group of Governmental Experts

¹ A/Res/61/89

examined the feasibility, scope and draft parameters for a comprehensive, legally binding instrument establishing common international standards for the import, export and transfer of conventional arms, and produced its consensus report. In **2009**, an open-ended working group held two meetings which allowed all States to contribute to the debate. And finally, the General Assembly decided to convene a Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in **2012** to elaborate a legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms and decided to consider the remaining sessions of the Open-ended Working Group as sessions of the Preparatory Committee for this Conference. Significantly, Member States have committed themselves to concluding a “strong and robust” treaty, which provides assurances of a meaningful process.

In negotiating an arms trade treaty, I would like to invite this meeting to make good use of and build upon already existing instruments within the United Nations framework. Allow me to remind you of these relevant agreements and processes.

- The Programme of Action on the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons and the International Tracing Instrument, which represent important measures in regulating a vital part of the arms trade and
- The UN Register on Conventional Arms, which already represents the principal global arrangement for transparency on arms exports and imports.

Also of note is the 2007 report by the Group of Governmental Experts on illicit arms brokering; States have acknowledged the importance of implementing the recommendations contained in that report.²

Furthermore, some General Assembly resolutions may be of high relevance, such as the recurring resolution on National Legislation on Transfer of Arms, Military Equipment and Dual-Use Goods and Technology,³ which has strengthened confidence among

² A/CONF.192/BMS/2008/3

³ A/64/48

Member States through the reporting of national legislation, regulations and procedures on arms transfers.

I would encourage you to include in your deliberations the possibilities for eventually streamlining some of these instruments, so that the United Nations may provide a more effective and inclusive framework for regulating transfers of conventional arms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Concerted international action, as well as the political will to rise above individual national interests will be necessary in order to give due consideration to the many relevant aspects related to the regulation of conventional arms transfers. This will require all of us to think and act in the interests of truly collective security, which is one of the founding principles of the United Nations. Guided by this vision, Member States would spare succeeding generations the scourge of war, reaffirm their faith in human rights and dignity and promote freedom and progress.

Resolution 64/48 has bestowed the mandate on this Preparatory Committee, during its sessions in 2010 and 2011 to make recommendations to the United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty on the elements required to attain an effective and balanced legally binding instrument on the highest possible common international standards for the transfer of conventional arms and to submit a report containing those elements to the General Assembly in 2011. In parallel, the Secretary-General will continue to seek the views of Member States on proposed treaty elements and on other relevant issues relating to the 2012 Conference for submission to the 2011 session of the General Assembly. The results of the Preparatory Committee, as well as national views, combined with the outcomes of the previous Group of Governmental Experts and the Open-ended Working Group, will serve to inform the four-week United Nations Conference on the Arms Trade Treaty in 2012.

Therefore, you share a considerable responsibility in bringing this process to a successful conclusion and, in so doing, help reverse the vicious cycles of conflict and armed violence, which up until now have so shattered and destroyed human life and potential.

Let me assure you that the Office for Disarmament Affairs stands ready to provide whatever substantive assistance the Preparatory Committee may require.

I thank you.